SOUTH CAROLINA DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL SERVICES

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STANDARDS OF CARE FOR BATTERERS TREATMENT

Effective date of implementation: January 1, 2005

Domestic Violence

STANDARDS OF CARE FOR BATTERERS TREATMENT

The South Carolina Department of Social Services in conjunction with the Palmetto Association of Family Violence Intervention Programs hereby establish quality standards that will be utilized for intervention with clients who have been identified as perpetrators of domestic violence in the state of South Carolina. Any program that provides such intervention to perpetrators of domestic violence will meet these program standards. They will be recognized as programs that:

- 1) accept perpetrators of domestic violence into treatment to satisfy court order or
- 2) identify its program as one that treats domestic violence perpetrators.

I. TREATMENT FOCUS:

Each program shall focus treatment primarily on ending physical, sexual, and psychological violence, and holding the perpetrator accountable for:

- (a) such perpetrator's violence and
- (b) changing such perpetrator's behavior

Each program will base its philosophy on not blaming the victim. Each program will seek to cooperate with other programs to ensure a comprehensive approach to stopping violence in families and promoting the safety for all family members. Each program shall include education about individual, cultural, and family dynamics of domestic violence.

II. TREATMENT MODALITY:

The domestic violence perpetrator program shall require participants to attend weekly group treatment sessions unless there is a documented, clinical reason for another modality. It is our recommendation that the perpetrator complete these weekly sessions before they become involved with other treatment programs except when a participant has been assessed with a chronic substance abuse or mental health problem that warrants intervention. It would then be the responsibility of the provider to refer these participants to the proper resources. Other forms of treatment that could be utilized after the group treatment may include the following:

- 1) individual
- 2) marital therapy
- 3) family therapy
- 4) substance abuse therapy or support groups
- 5) medication reviews
 - (a) The primary goal for the perpetrator's treatment is to increase victim's safety by providing skills to the perpetrator to learn to change his/her abusive behavior. If marital or family therapy is not consistent with

this goal then these forms of treatment should not be pursued by the perpetrator.

III. PROGRAM ISSUES:

Programs complying with the standards for domestic violence perpetrator programs shall adopt and implement treatment program policies and procedures which address, at a minimum, the following issues:

- A) Victim Safety:
 - 1) have policies and procedures which state how you will adequately assess the safety of the victim of the perpetrator
 - 2) take the following steps to protect the safety of the victim:
 - (a) notify the victim of perpetrator's acceptance or rejection for treatment services
 - (b) encourage victims to make plans to protect themselves and their children
 - (c) inform victims of the availability of outreach, advocacy, emergency shelter services, and safety planning offered by domestic violence victim programs
- B) Nondiscrimination. The programs shall not discriminate against any applicant based on:
 - 1) race
 - 2) age
 - 3) gender
 - 4) disability
 - 5) religion
 - 6) marital status
 - 7) political affiliation
 - 8) educational attainment
 - 9) socio-economic class
 - 10) ethnicity
 - 11) national origin or
 - 12) sexual orientation

These programs will provide culturally sensitive services.

- C) Screening authority and responsibilities. The programs shall possess the authority and responsibilities to:
 - 1) accept or reject any referrals

- 2) to develop and implement criteria for acceptance or rejection for services rendered
- 3) to impose conditions that participants shall follow in order to participate in the program

D) Rights of Participants:

- 1) Each program shall acknowledge it will:
 - (a) provide the highest level of quality service to participants and
 - (b) assure all participants are treated with respect and dignity
- 2) Program staff, board, and volunteers will:
 - (a) not engage in, condone, or tolerate acts of sexual harassment or exploitation of anyone that is involved in these services, this may include employees, student interns, program participants, or victims
 - (b) maintain a climate in all relationships with colleagues and participants based on mutual respect for one another

E) Confidentiality:

- (1) Right to confidentiality. Programs shall adhere to the standards of confidentiality required by Section 19-11-85 of the South Carolina Code that prohibits psychotherapists from revealing the confidences of patients except in specified circumstances.
- (2) A waiver of confidentiality occurs when there are specified circumstances such as a threat to self or others, or the court directs that disclosure is necessary. If a perpetrator is court ordered there needs to be mandatory releases signed for the following purposes:
 - (a) a release for each program to:
 - 1) inform the victim, and/or the victim's community advocate and legal advocate that the perpetrator is in treatment with the program
 - 2) provide information when possible for safety purposes to the victim and/or the victim's community legal advocate
 - (a) a release to prior and current treatment agencies to provide information concerning the perpetrator when appropriate
 - (b) a release for the program to provide information on the perpetrator to relevant legal entities including:

- 1) lawyers;
- 2) courts;
- 3) probation and parole
- 4) child protective services
- 5) child welfare services.
- 6) adult protective services
- c) a release for each program to notify any person whose safety appears to be at risk due to the participants potential for violence and lethality, including but not limited to:
 - 1) the victim
 - 2) any children
 - 3) significant others
 - 4) victims advocates or
 - 5) police
- 3) Optional releases for programs may require a participant to sign a release permitting the program to provide the victim with periodic reports regarding the participants participation. It is not mandatory to obtain this release or to provide this information to victim.
- 4) Victim confidentiality for each program shall treat information provided by the victim to the program as confidential unless the victim provides permission for the disclosure of information. If a victim reports a new offense occurring, the victim will be encouraged to contact the appropriate law enforcement agency.
- 5) Confidentiality in group activities as the program groups will be:
 - a) Confidential in group activities except as provided under subsection (5) (b) of this section and
 - b) closed to those other than participants, program staff and/or volunteer group leaders. Others that are invited by group leaders may include:
 - (1) professionals and those offering interpretation services for the deaf, and/or hearing impaired or language translation
 - (2) others bringing specific information critical to the group
- 6) Each program shall obtain a written agreement for confidentiality with all participants and invited guests. The confidentiality agreement shall prohibit disclosure of identities of participants or participant-specific information unless participants provide written permission for disclosure.

IV. TREATMENT STANDARDS:

Each program will conduct a complete, clinical intake intake/assessment interview of a perpetrator and compile a written document, including at a minimum:

A. Intake/Assessment

- 1) current and past violence history
- 2) a substance abuse assessment
- 3) history of threats of homicide or suicide
- 4) history of ideation of homicide or suicide
- 5) a lethality risk assessment
- 6) possession of, access to, or a history of use of weapons
- 7) history of episode of rage
- 8) history of depression and other mental health problems
- 9) history of having sexually abused the battered victim and others
- 10) history of the perpetrator's domestic violence victimization and/or sexual abuse victimization
- 11) access to the battered victim
- 12) criminal history (if available)
- 13) assessment of learning disabilities, literacy, and special language needs

B. Treatment Plan:

1. Each program will base a participant's group treatment on the clinical intake/assessment. Each program shall develop a treatment that adequately and appropriately addresses the needs of the individual participant.

2. Each program will:

- a) evaluate whether a participant should be required to engage in drug and alcohol assessment, mental health assessment, or other assessment services while the person is a participant in the program
- b) develop a service plan accordingly and
- c) make appropriate referrals outside the agency. Each program shall determine prioritization of service
- 3. Programs will consider issues relating to the participant's prior victimization in designing the treatment plan
 - a) Programs will consider the appropriateness of domestic violence victim services for participants who present extensive histories of prior victimization.
 - b) programs will provide separate treatment groups based on gender.

- 4) Contract with program participants. Each program will require a participant to enter into a formal contract for services. Each program's contract will include, at a minimum, the following elements:
 - a) Statement of program treatment philosophy consistent with these program standards including:
 - 1) no victim blaming
 - 2) stopping all forms of battering
 - 3) holding the abuser accountable and
 - 4) requiring primary concern for the safety of victim
 - b) An agreement to cooperate with program rules
 - c) An agreement to:
 - 1) stop violent and threatening behavior
 - 2) be non-abusive and non-controlling in relationships
 - 3) follow through will all group assignments
 - 4) comply with all court orders
 - 5) cooperate with the rules for group participation
 - 6) execute all necessary documents for release of information to battered victims, law enforcement, the courts, probation, and others as appropriate and as described under subsection (5) (b) and (c) of this section
 - d) attendance policies and consequences of inadequate attendance
 - e) the expectation of active participation, including sharing personal experiences, values, and attitudes, and completing group activities and assignments
 - f) other program expectations, such as written exams, concurrent treatment requirements, rules regarding possession of weapons, and any other conditions on participation in the program
 - g) criteria for administrative and contractual discharge and completion of treatment
 - h) the right to confidentiality within the specified limits, and the requirements that participants safeguard the confidentiality of other group members
 - i) duty of the program to warn and protect victims, law enforcement, and third parties related to any risk of serious harm posed by the participant

- j) requirement that the participants:
- 1) provide documents related to prior violence, prior or concurrent treatment services or
- 2) execute appropriate releases to authorize document provision by others with whom the participant has had privileged communication
- k) fees/methods of payment
- 1) not to exceed the maximum amount allowed by the Judicial Court.
- m) drug and alcohol policy including the requirement that the client attend sessions free of drugs or alcohol
- 5. Program educational curriculum requirements will identify and utilize an educational curriculum for program participants and will address at least the following topics and issues:
 - a) belief systems, which legitimize and sustain violence against family members, and/or use of violence or threat of violence to establish power and control over a partner
 - b) definitions of abuse, battering, and domestic violence as described in the program standards within this chapter
 - c) accountability of batterers for their actions and the need to avoid blaming
 - d) forms of abuse including:
 - 1) physical
 - 2) emotional and sexual abuse
 - 3) economic manipulation or domination
 - 4) property destruction
 - 5) stalking
 - 6) terroristic threat and
 - 7) acts jeopardizing the well-being and safety of battered partners, children, pets, other family members, and friends
 - e) South Carolina state law and practice regarding domestic violence
 - f) opportunities for each participant to identify all of their abusive conduct, the pattern of that conduct, and cultural supports which legitimize or excuse that conduct
 - g) techniques for achieving non-abusive or non-controlling conduct
 - h) opportunities to examine values or beliefs, which facilitate abuse
 - i) adverse legal and social consequences for batterers
 - j) impact of abuse and battering on children and incompatibility of violence and abuse with responsible parenting
 - k) necessity of meeting financial and legal obligations to family

members

- opportunity and assistance for a participant to develop a responsibility plan to ensure accountability for the participant's commitment to divest all abusive power and control over the victim
- m) cycle of violence
- n) Time-out
- o) anger management
- p) conflict resolution
- q) communication skills (being assertive and utilizing active listening;
- r) how substance abuse impacts relationships
- 6) The required minimum treatment period is that each program will:
 - a) define the treatment period as the period of time required for the participant to complete the criteria for completion of treatment defined by the program. Satisfactory completion of treatment should not be based solely as a certain period of time or as a certain number of sessions.
 - b) at a minimum, equate the treatment period to at least six (6) months with goals to obtain at least one year of accountability for the participant in the program. This should include attendance of a minimum
 - 1) twenty-six weekly group sessions at one and a half hours weekly to the completion of treatment criteria as described under subsection (ll) of this section
- 7) The program will provide criteria for satisfactory completion of treatment. At the minimum, the program will include the following criteria for completion of treatment:
 - a) completion of the minimum treatment period requirements
 - b) attendance at weekly group sessions and all other required treatment periods
 - c) cooperation of group rules throughout treatment services
 - d) cessation of violence
 - e) cessation of other abusive and controlling conduct while a participant in the program
 - f) adherence to the participant's responsibility plan
 - g) compliance with court orders and
 - h) compliance with other conditions and provisions of the contract for treatment services, such as compliance with substance abuse or mental health intervention
- 8) Notification of completion of treatment as the program will:
 - a) notify the court of completion of treatment by any court mandated

- participant
- b) when feasible, notify the victim of completion of treatment by the participant and
- c) only specify that the participant has been given a contractual discharge which is based on adequate compliance with the contract and any court order
- 9) The program will establish and implement written policies regarding consequences for re-offense and non-compliance with program policies.
- 10) Termination without completion of treatment.
 - a) each program will implement guidelines for discharge so that:
 - 1) discharge decisions are uniform and predictable; and
 - 2) discrimination does not occur against participants, special treatment services may not be available based upon a client's:
 - a) race
 - b) age
 - c) gender
 - d) disability
 - e) religion
 - f) marital status
 - g) political affiliation
 - h) educational attainment
 - i) socio-economic class
 - j) ethnicity
 - k) national origin or
 - l) sexual orientation
 - b) each program will document in writing, non-compliance with the program participant contract, with a court order, probation agreement, or group rules
 - c) each program will determine if termination of a participants treatment without completion will be made when the following circumstances occur:
 - 1) continued abuse, particularly physical violence
 - 2) failure to maintain regular attendance
 - 3) failure to make appropriate use of the treatment program
 - 4) failure to comply with other treatment conditions or provisions which are part of the participants contract, such as involvement in a recovery program for drugs and alcohol, failure to continue involvement with mental health treatment
 - 5) failure to work out plan to pay fees
 - 6) violation of any of the group rules; and

7) violation of any provisions of a court order

11) Treatment Staff Qualifications:

All staff with direct treatment contact with participants will:

- 1) have earned a bachelor's degree from an accredited human service program; any staff hired after January 1, 2005, who provides direct treatment to program participants must possess a master's degree from an accredited human service program.
- 2) have three years experience in family violence; one of these years group experience;
- 3) have a minimum of twenty hours of specific domestic violence treatment training within one year of employment;
- 4) co-facilitators will have a bachelor's degree in a human service field and two years experience;
- 5) remain free of criminal connection involving moral turpitude.

12) Supervisory Staff Qualifications:

- a) Each program will have at least one person providing supervision to treatment staff. The person(s) providing supervision must meet the following criteria:
 - 1) will have earned a master's degree from an accredited human service program;
 - 2) have a minimum of three years experience working with perpetrators and victims of domestic violence of which includes:
 - a) a minimum of twenty four (24) hours of specific domestic violence training within one year of employment;
 - b) one year of experience will be in a group facilitation; and
 - c) one year of supervisory experience.
- 13) Additional Requirements of Treatment Staff, Supervisory Staff and Treatment Providers:
 - a) Within 2 weeks of the first group meeting or within two weeks after a new participant has joined an existing group, the treatment staff/group facilitator will prepare a written assessment of each program participant and send it to the supervisory staff for review
 - a copy of the assessments will be maintained in the supervisor's/provider's records.
 - b) Supervisory staff will attend and observe a full group session within thirty (30) days of the first group meeting and thereafter every thirty (30) days, unless supervision is needed/requested more frequently;
 - c) Supervisory staff must submit a written report to the provider after attendance at each group session;

d) Providers must submit the supervisory reports to DSS each quarter.

V. ORIENTATION AND CONTINUING PROFESSIONAL EDUCATION REQUIREMENTS:

- A. Each program will provide orientation for new paid and volunteer staff to acquaint the staff with the program's philosophy, organization, curricula, policies, procedures, and goals.
- B. Each program will provide paid and volunteer staff with ongoing training and supervision by a trainer with expertise in domestic violence victim services and perpetrator treatment.

C. Support Staff:

- 1) persons having direct treatment contact with participants shall complete a minimum of twenty hours of continuing professional education within each calendar year
- 2) person's education shall include four or more hours of training per year on issues of cultural sensitivity
- 3) persons training in domestic violence, substance abuse, mental health or other issues relating to the treatment of domestic violence perpetrators shall quality as continuing professional education and
- 4) persons may obtain continuing professional education through classes seminars, workshops, video or audio tapes or other self-study programs

VI. COOPERATION WITH OTHER PROGRAMS:

Each program shall not exist in isolation. They shall maintain cooperative working relationships with local domestic violence victim programs, shelters, criminal justice programs and other providers. Each program will have the following:

- a) evidence of establishment of referral mechanisms between the domestic violence victim services programs and
- b) batterer treatment programs.

VII. KNOWLEDGE OF LAW AND JUSTICE SYSTEM PRACTICES:

Each program shall show evidence of an understanding of the laws pertaining to domestic violence and the operation of the justice system. At a minimum, programs will be familiar with the following:

- 1) state laws regulating the response to domestic violence by the criminal justice systems;
- 2) relief available to victims of domestic violence afforded:

 South Carolina Domestic Violence Law and Civil Protection orders and Retraining Orders
 local law enforcement prosecution, and court and probation policies regarding domestic violence cases.

